

SONGS IN TIME'S DESPITE

JAMES LEWIS MILLIGAN



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BY
JAMES LEWIS MILLIGAN



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TO

CLARENCE ROOK

NOTES

With two exceptions, all the following Poems have appeared in "The Daily Chronicle" or "The Graphic," and the Author's thanks are due to the Editors for their kind permission to reprint them.

The Poem appearing on page 38 has this year gained the Liverpool University "Hemans Prize" for lyrical poetry.

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Songs in Time's Despite

The Ferry

Beneath, the sombre river rolls,
Above, the stable stars look down,
Around me are a thousand souls,
Before them are a thousand goals
In yonder glimmering town.

I gaze upon the dawning shore,
I move amid the phantom throng ;
A cadence of the days of yore
Comes floating through the cabin door—
It is too sad a song !

Bear me, brave Boat, upon the Tide,
Thy Heart will soon its throbbing cease ;
In questioning I must abide
Till I shall gain the other side,
My Home is there—my peace.

The Island of the Dead

Borne on a sombre barge, array'd in white,
Upon a sea as 'twere of molten lead,
Beneath a sky charged with a mystic light,
They brought her to the Island of the Dead.

Gaunt granite cliffs rose sheer from out the deep,
Shoreless, far based in adamant below ;
The air was hush'd, like as a house asleep—
Sleep that had smooth'd the aching brow of woe.

They came unto a low and open place,
And gently brought their lucent freight to land :
Each with a sigh gazed on her dreaming face,
Each yearn'd to speak, but none could speech command.

All reverently they bore her to a glade
Amid immortal poplar trees and yew,
And there within a cave their hope they laid,
And knelt around and wept—but not with rue.

Then back toward the island's stony marge
They turned and left her, glancing oft behind,
And entering slow into the empty barge,
Launch'd their lithe oars and sped as on the wind.

The Dead Leader

(On the occasion of the death of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.)

Peace ! Ye noisy factions, peace !
Let your wordy clamour cease ;
Turn and see a leader low,
Do him honour, friend or foe.

Honour him, a soldier true,
Standing firm when friends were few ;
Single-eyed, and brave, and good,
Clad in mail of rectitude.

Death alone could make him yield ;
Bear him slowly from the field ;
Now for him the fight is done,
And his long repose is won.

In Manus Tuas——.

Dark though it be,
Let it be true !
Give thou to me
The naked view !

Fearless I go
Into the night,
Heedless of woe
Or Death's affright !

Out of the Past,
With all its woes,
Unto this last,
With all its foes.

On to the fore,
Into the gloom,
On to the shore,
Into the tomb !

Sternly I tread
The invious road ;
Nothing I dread—
My end is God !

After Rain

I thought the sun would never shine again,
But that the world was given o'er to rain,
And that the drooping flowers in their beds
Would never, never raise their smitten heads

And so I laid me down to sigh and weep,
And, weary of my life, I fell asleep :
I slept—a long eternity it seem'd ;
I dream'd—ah ! who can tell me what I dream'd ?

I woke at morn, with sunlight in my eyes,
And through the casement laugh'd the azure skies !
The forest rang with one triumphant voice,
And all the hills and valleys did rejoice !

Then to my little garden did I haste,
Dreading to find it all a dreary waste ;
But soon to joy was turned my anxious fear,
For in each flower there gleam'd a happy tear !

The Sea

There's forgiveness and forgetfulness in thee,
Thou solemn surging sea !
The myriad music of thy rythmic roar
As thou dost break in foam upon the shore
Doth strangely comfort me :
For thou art part of yon immensity,
As I of the immortal Soul of All,
Born out of suffering like thy mighty moan,
As on the strand of Time I fall,
A moment known,
Then backward roll into eternity.

The Loom

To and fro the shuttle goes
On the Loom of London town,
Warp and woof of joys and woes,
Gold and silver, black and rose ;
But the pattern no one knows,
For 'tis woven upside down !

The Web

This web of life so finely spun,
These golden sands how fast they run!

Ah! Soul, why dost thou grieve?

The sorest trial in thy way
Will last but for a fleeting day,

Time ever did deceive:

These things that so enduring seem,

These ills that haunt thy brain,

Shall vanish even as a dream,

And nothing shall remain.

Nor trouble thou thy little mind

O'er death, for Death is very kind;

Sweet Birth and Death are twins:

One sets thy feet upon life's road,

The other bears thee back to God,

And buries but thy sins.

Thy refuge is Eternity,

Fear not Time's false alarms;

For thou hast always under thee

The Everlasting Arms.

Under the Snow

Over the wall I look, and lo !
All the graves are under the snow :
A more appropriate pall, I ween,
Than Summer's embroider'd garb of green ;
For Death is white, and cold, and dumb,
And on its waste there's ne'er a crumb
For the birds forlorn of yester-year,
That wait to see the Spring appear ;
That wait and starve in perplex'd despair,
And dream of a world that once was fair.

The Deserted Harbour

(To a Town which once was a Port, but which the receding sea has left : it is a Port no longer.)

Thou old-time Mistress of the amorous Sea,
Whose loving arms he once did round thee fling ;
Who bore from distant lands his gifts to thee,
Then left thee to immortal sorrowing !

How oft the white-wing'd galleons from afar
Have hailed thy sun-lit turrets o'er the main !
Thy shores have echoed with the shock of war,
The victor's shout, the cries of valiant slain !

These moss-grown wharves, and wide deserted ways ;
These crumbling fanes and haunts of merchandise,
Seem wrapp'd in dreams of unreturning days :
Here one might ponder and grow sad—but wise.

How many stories might these stones recall,
Stories of love and sorrow—all forgot !
Here did the sordid merchant rise and fall ;
The luckless poet mused upon his lot.

Here did the wild reformer weave his dreams
Of earth-bound satisfaction for the race ;
The pious priest expounded heavenly themes,
And talked with the Eternal face to face.

The pompous monarch with his gaudy train
Strutted his little hour in tinsel state ;
The toiler spent his powers of hand and brain—
And all have yielded to a kindred fate.

How mean the vaunted sovereignty of man !
This earth has buried myriads of his kind ;
The most triumphant empire in the van
Shall tire and fall, and soon be left behind.

Dream on, Old Love ! hark to the murmuring Sea !
The wild gull's cry, the voices from the shore !
Dream of a day when he'll return to thee—
Alas ! thou shalt be dreaming evermore !

My Friend

He sail'd away by the midnight tide
Across the Western sea ;
All dark and still his craft did glide,
He look'd not back on me.

He look'd not back, he gave no sign
That he was loth to go ;
He fix'd his eyes on the far sea-line
Where the golden stars did glow.

I call'd, and call'd with stifled breath,
I wept upon the shore ;
But he sail'd away on the ship of Death
To the land of Nevermore !

Omar

Fain would I life's perplexities resign,
And cease o'er fickle Fortune to repine,
 Ignore this moral mentor in my breast,
And drown my sorrows in thy wanton wine :

But for this Something in my being's core,
Which lingers in the Past and looks Before,
 Which, though 'tis coax'd and pamper'd—worries
 yet ;
And, though it gluts, still craves and calls for more !

Alas ! for me, my Omar Khayyam sweet,
There grows no vine with fruitage so complete
 On earth to yield thy peace-imparting wine—
Thou knowest that thine own is counterfeit.

Much as I'd love thy vintage to consume,
I must away, though it be to my doom—
 I have a mortal quarrel with my Fate !
I envy not thy rose-besprinkl'd tomb.

Farewell ! sweet Omar—and my thanks to thee,
For thou hast sung my sorrows charmingly ;
 But thou dost dwell in shelter'd gardens fair—
And I must put me out upon the Sea.

Here is a Day !

Here is a day, and here is a man—
Muscle and brain, and heart and soul ;
Here is a world for to scheme and plan,
There is night and the stars for goal !

Whether it all be a fleeting dream,
Or be it solid and fix'd and real,
Heed not at all, but follow the gleam,
The beckoning star of your ideal !

Fate is a word that the Devil made ;
Luck is the lie of the man who shirks ;
Set your hand to your proper trade—
All things come to the man who works !

Seek no rest from the world of care,
Stay not long in the house of tears ;
Work ! and the world will be glad and fair—
Rest is sure at the end of the years !

The Prophet

I.

A thrush sang on a leafless tree,
He sang but to himself and me :
 “ A foolish bird to sing,” I said,
 “ When all the world is cold and dead ! ”
His answer, in a bolder note,
Came bubbling from his vibrant throat :
 “ I sing about the world to be ! ”

II.

Amid the summer's fragrant bowers
 A thrush sang to my Love and me ;
I look'd upon the mortal flowers :
“ Ah ! Love,” I said, “ this life of ours
 At best is nought but vanity !
 Deluded bird, so blithe to sing
 When death must come to every thing ! ”
He answer'd in a sweeter strain :
“ Who gave me life can give again—
 I sing Love's immortality ! ”

Paradise Lost

Christmas days in visions rise,
Days before my years were seven,
Ere I grew so worldly wise,
When I saw with other eyes,
And this earth was heaven.

I have grown into a man,
And discarded every toy,
Yet the child I never can,
He is there like Peter Pan—
An immortal boy !

Still he hangs on Christmas Eve
His wee stockings on the bed,
Falls asleep in make-believe,
While the happy fairies weave
Dreams about his head.

Though I've studied Nature's laws,
Probed the world unto the heart ;
Trac'd life to its primal cause—
That old mystic Santa Claus
Smiles at all my art !

All our fine philosophy,
All the wisdom of the wise,
Is but that old fatal tree ;
And our early infancy—
Our lost Paradise !

Sanctuary

Source of my soul, and Father of my being,
Whose will ordain'd these years of vanity;
Whose ample eye through distant spaces seeing,
Turns from the vast and looks in love on me :

To thee I come, like as a bird returning
Swift homeward to its mate at close of day ;
My weary soul for rest and comfort yearning,
Sure of my end I cannot miss the way.

Here for a while I tread the path of sorrow,
Alone, and yet I wander not alone ;
For even here in fleeting hours I borrow
The radiance and the rapture of Thy Throne.

These chafing cares, these evils which surround me,
This fleshy veil that blinds my inward eye,
This gaudy world whose narrow joys would bound
me—
Are all forgot when home to Thee I fly

Pre-existence

Men wonder if they've lived before,
To me the thing is plain ;
I've lived a thousand lives of yore,
And I shall live again !

I've lived a lifetime in a day,
An aeon in an hour ;
Unnumber'd blooms have fled away,
Yet life is still in flower.

I know not how my life began,
Nor how I'll cease to be ;
But this I know, I never can
Recall non-entity !

What though I wither in the earth,
And stem and root shall die :
My driven seed shall come to birth
Beneath another sky.

Liverpool Cathedral

Stone by stone the building grows,
Each one hewn and fix'd in pain ;
Yet no workman fully knows
What is in the builder's brain.

So this life of ours may be,
With its clamour, toil, and care,
But the building time, and we
Shall at last behold it fair !

Two Ships

Two ships of war met on the sea,
And they each had sailors brave and free ;
And the sun on high was shining.

But it was plain they were enemies,
For a shot from each boom'd on the breeze ;
While the sun on high was shining.

They roar'd, and charg'd, and back'd and swerv'd,
Each gave the other what he deserv'd ;
And the sun on high was shining.

They shell'd each other an hour or so ;
And then they suddenly went below !
Yet the sun on high was shining !

And no one knew which ship had won !
And neither knew where the other had gone !
But the sun on high was shining.

God's Library

God has a library,
Wondrous and vast,
Where books are stored on the
Shelves of the Past :

Tragedies, comedies,
Dramas of yore,
Dead worlds' long histories—
Infinite lore !

God has His favourite
Volumes, and these
Bound are in vellum white—
Biographies.

The Carpenter

When Jesus paus'd amid His labour, leaning
Upon His plane to take a moment's breath ;
Did He, like me, thus ponder o'er the meaning
Of birth, and life, and death ?

Or, when His work was done and in the gloaming
He put His tools back in the wooden chest,
I wonder if, like mine, when He was homing,
Deep sadness filled His breast ?

If in the red defeat of day retreating,
He saw a symbol of His Calvary—
Or if, like me, He felt how life was fleeting,
And wept that it must be ?

If when He laid His body, limp and aching
With duteous toil, upon His humble bed,
He closed His eyes, nor thought upon the waking,
And lost, like me, the dread ?

The End of It

(To Julia Mouton—"a poor old woman of eighty, who was carried from a miserable room to a Paris hospital; she had been the finest horsewoman at the Imperial Circus, and the 'Emperor's friend'".)

Fair in form and face was she,
Long ago
(Sing it low);
Built in perfect symmetry,
Loved by all the world was she
(Sing it low),
Long ago!

Full of life as grape of wine,
Sorrow free,
Merrily
Squander'd she her charms divine,
Till life's sweetness turned to brine;
Gentle be,
Fair was she!

All her sins are wash'd away,
Wash'd in tears
Through the years,
Unto time and slow decay
Every farthing did she pay;
Sorrow clears
All arrears!

Fair in form and face was she,
 Long ago
 (Sing it low);
Built in perfect symmetry,
Loved by all the world was she
 (Sing it low),
 Long ago !

The Craft of Poesy

Ye poets who have never borne
The burden and the heat of day,
Who, when ye mourn, can only mourn
With boobies of a bygone day ;

Go burn your vapid verses all,
And plunge into the present strife ;
Go dare the Trojan to the wall,
And learn your poetry from life !

Here to your hands are living themes,
Had ye the Poet's eyes to see ;
Here's stuff of which to build your dreams,
Knew ye the craft of poesy !

The Long Evenings

When I get my pipe a-going,
Seated in my ingle chair,
With the smoke around me flowing,
And forget my every care ;

With my eyes upon the fire,
And my mind in realms of dream,
I obtain the world's desire,
And of life I taste the cream.

Oh how sweet 'tis to be quiet,
When the work of day is done,
Free from all the rant and riot
Of the world beneath the sun !

Though four solid walls surround me,
And my world seems very small,
There is nothing that can bound me,
For in thought I compass all !

A Sleep and a Forgetting

We had a tiff last night,
My wife and I ;
We both thought we were right,
We'd rather die
Than give in, so unblest,
In anger deep,
We laid us down to rest,
And fell asleep.

Smiling we woke at morn,
As if had been
No disconcerting thorn
Our hearts between ;
In sleep we had forgot
Our difference,
So we recalled it not
Again from thence.

And may it not be so
When we awake,
From that whereto we go,
When morn shall break,
And we shall meet with those
Whom now we fight –
Forget that we were foes
The other night ?

Love's Egotism

'Tis strange we met,
How strange ! and yet,
 It had been strange indeed
If I had gone
Through life alone,
 Nor found my deepest need !

For well I knew
That one like you
 Dwelt somewhere in the earth ;
That we should meet
And be complete,
 For this God gave us birth.

Yea, it may be
For you and me
 Alone He made the world,
That all the past
Led to this last
 Fair flower of love unfurl'd !

Time and I

When the world was young and fair,
Time and I lived well together ;
Gifts he gave me rich and rare,
Wondrous palaces of air,
Hopes that knew no tether !

Then old Time grew mean and queer ;
All the precious things he'd given,
Which I'd come to hold so dear,
He took from me year by year,
Till my heart was riven !

Now old Time and I are foes,
And I fight him every hour ;
But the old deceiver knows
He will conquer at the close
By his staying power.

Yet I'll fight him to the end
With persistency diurnal ;
For I must my heart defend,
Lest I lose my only friend—
Hope in the Eternal.

The Black Country

Along the eastern sky the laggard dawn
Had hung her rosy signal when we came
Into that country which they call "the black"—
A name well-fitting. I had been asleep,
And as I looked upon the sombre scene,
I wonder'd if it were a dream of hell!
And if the shape that stood beside me were
Another Virgil, and the flying train
Old Charon's boat! Now heavy clouds of smoke
Marr'd all the delicate promise of the east:
Drear fields of shapeless structures lay around,
Gaunt chimneys, belching forth sulphurous fume
And flame—a sight which to describe would tax
The pen of Dante. Yet this was no dream,
But palpable as it was ghastly! There,
Amid that hopeless and infernal zone,
Men pass long years of unavailing toil,
And die with faith in neither earth nor heaven!
O God! And must we pay this cruel price
For transitory Empire? Shall men's souls
Be lethargis'd in myriads, that we
May boast our motors and our ironclads?

Nightfall on the Mersey

The stubborn rearguard of the day
Still challenges the van of night ;
The tide, full sated, ebbs away,
The last gull takes its seaward flight.

Spectral against the waning West,
The boats at anchor rock to sleep ;
The city lulls itself to rest—
Out yonder is the homeless deep.

Along the river's dusky edge,
The lamps in far perspective merge,
Slow tapering like a starry wedge,
At the horizon's dying verge.

From out the portal of the East
The pilgrim stars come silent on—
The great, the less, and then the least,
Till all the dome of night is won.

I stand in thought amid the years,
Cloth'd with a frail mortality ;
And, like this harbour, life appears
An Inlet of Immensity ;

At which the passing souls of men
Put in for short or longer stay,
Discharge their freight, load up, and then
Slip from their moorings and—away !

All Souls' Day

(From the German of Ferdinand von Saar.)

The evening mist, grey, damp and cold,
Hangs like a veil across the wold,

Enshrouding all in gloom ;
And in the grave-yard on the slope
Of yonder mountain, lamps of hope
Burn on each silent tomb.

There amaranths, which never die,
And loyal asters glow ;
Fond tribute to the dead who lie
In cold repose below.

This is the day when every one
Thinks on the loved ones who are gone,

And decks the place of rest,
Where they to dust in secret fall,
Beyond recall, beyond recall !

Deep in earth's quiet breast.
The memories of the living twine
Round gravestones old and new ;
Fragrant and tender and divine,
Garlands of love and rue

But who remembers those unnam'd,
Unloved, whom none has ever claimed,
Who perished far away,
Far from their land of home and birth,
Unmiss'd, unmourn'd ; and back to earth
Have yielded up their clay ?

Yes, one remembers, who has fought,
Who all their woes has known ;
Who oft has shudder'd when he thought
Their fate might be his own.

Late at Night

(From the German by Fritz Lienhard.)

Does someone knock at my forgotten door ?

The night is wild, O come inside to me !

The nut-tree wails, the storm with angry roar

Sweeps through the fields, the rain drones drearily :
O come to me, for I am all alone !

Art thou an exile full of woe and pain ?

Art thou a man whom God has ceas'd to bless ?

O if thou in the storm and driving rain,

Wilt put away thy pride and bitterness—
Come in to me, I am thy comforter.

I hear a rustling—'tis a frighten'd child

Beside the brook there—little outcast, come !

If man's rough word hath driv'n thee on the wild,

And thou art seeking for a warmer home—
O come to me, for I have all you seek

But no one comes, not e'en a child doth mind

My friendly call, none brings to me his pain ;
On desert hills wanders the gloomy wind,

The nut-tree wails, down pours the cold, cold rain,
The night is wild, and I am all alone.

Blind

Like as a blind man knocks his way,
Unconscious of the glowing day,
 Guided by touch and sound :
E'en so the streets of Thought I tread,
Blind to the Sun above my head,
 The spirits thronging round.

Though God has will'd my eyes to seal,
He gave me sense to hear and feel ;
 I will not mourn my loss :
For when at danger's point I stand,
I know some kind, though unseen hand
 Will lead me safe across.

Among the Shadows

I move among them day by day,
I talk with them familiarly ;
But when the daylight flies away,
I know not them—they know not me.

To-night I watch'd the sun go down
Beyond the city's towers and domes ;
Till twilight, in his dusky gown,
Bestirr'd the hearths in squalid homes.

I saw ghost-children at their play,
And heard weird voices through the gloom ;
I turn'd and went my ghostly way,
And enter'd my warm, lighted room.

I scann'd the pages of the past,
The flat earth rounded to a star !
I wander'd through the glowing vast,
And brought strange tidings from afar.

I took my pen to set in rhyme
The wondrous things I'd seen and heard ;
But something whisper'd, " 'Tis a crime ;
You must not utter e'en a word ! "

Down There

Here did they bury men long ago,
Saint and sinner, and high and low,
Side by side in immortal sleep,
Each in his little cot, ten foot deep !

I wonder if, down in that solid gloom,
They hold communion, tomb with tomb,
As live folks talk in their beds at night
Of things that happen'd in broad daylight ?

It may be they talk of their children's pranks,
And kick their coffins with crumbling shanks,
As they giggle with glee at our knowing ways,
And compare the new with the olden days !

The Bard

I, too, have cheer'd the fallen in the fight,
And offer'd straws of hope to drowning men ;
I've held my candle in the windy night,
I've given and expected not again.

I've barter'd with the ages for their gold,
And hoarded up their riches in my brain ;
And every gaud and homely treasure sold,
That I the precious pearl of truth might gain :

And what's my profit ? Penury and care !
A servile sufferance of clever churls,
Who do not know the value of my ware,
But, like the swine, would spurn my lucent pearls.

I must not grieve o'er irremedial wrongs—
Such ever was the portion of the Bard ;
My duty is to write immortal songs ;
Hope is my food—a tablet my reward !

Give me a Pen

Give me a pen, a pen of steel,
Dipp'd in my bosom's blood ;
That I may set down all I feel,
And fix this morbid mood !

Nay, give me a pen of gold,
Dipp'd in my soul's pure fire ;
And I will tell what ne'er was told,
And prove old Death a liar !

Fame

He fell in love with Fame,
And sought her smile for years ;
But she ignor'd his claim,
Though it was made with tears.

He toil'd both day and night,
Yet scarce could make his bread ;
At last, one morning bright
Reveal'd him lying dead.

Then did the strumpet Fame
Fly swiftly to his side,
And, calling loud his name,
Bewail'd the death he died !

Captive

Like as a bird, confin'd within a cage,
That has no room to spread its wings and fly ;
But just to feed doth all its hours engage,
So in this narrow sphere of sense am I

I try to sing, but ever through the strain
The note of sorrow all unbidden rings ;
My songs are but the progeny of pain,
Sad lamentations o'er the flux of things.

How can I sing the joyous songs of home,
Or stay the urgent melody of tears,
When in this Babylon of Time I roam,
Aye hustl'd by the changing of the years ?

And so, upon the water's lonely strand,
I sit and weep for my far native land.

Love and Time

Grieve not that heartless Time should take away
The gift of youth and beauty which he gave ;
For that was but the model in rough clay
Of the immortal image Love did grave.

Yea, I have rear'd a palace in my heart,
Where thou dost dwell perennially fair ;
Its halls are hung with memory's finest art,
And all Love's tender lore is treasur'd there.

Time or decay its beauty cannot mar,
For it is builded in eternity,
And hangs on nothing, wondrous as a star,
Self-pois'd in perfect equanimity :

Who builds obedient to the laws of Love,
Builds what nor Time nor stress can ever move.

Time, the Vandal

Old Time has played the vandal with my dreams,
And crumbl'd all my palaces to dust ;
And yet I build and organise new schemes
From out the sorry ruin and the rust.

And these I know will share an equal fate,
And last but for a brief and brilliant day ;
For Time doth like a thief in ambush wait,
And in the night shall steal my hopes away

But though I his fell treachery foreknow,
I'll build no less securely or less fair ;
For, like a happy child doth bubbles blow—
I'll send my bubbles floating on the air,

And count myself a conqueror of Time
That I can make such beauty out of slime.

Heart—Winter

I know that Spring will soon be here again,
Her vital breath pervades the morning air ;
Old Winter soon shall end his ruthless reign,
And all the world, as ever, shall be fair :

But what avails the coming of the Spring ?
Can she the Winter's ravages repay ?
What though the sun shall garnish everything,
And Summer robe the world in raiment gay ?

Still in my heart shall Winter reign supreme,
Bleak winds of woe shall wail about my soul ;
Fast lock'd in ice shall be joy's laughing stream,
And I shall huddle o'er hope's meagre coal !

For Death has hid thy glory from my sight,
Who wert my only source of warmth and light !

Recognition

Ah ! surely somewhere in the vast unknown
Thy outcast soul hath found a dwelling place ;
To some more perfect planet thou hast flown,
Where I one day shall look into thy face.

I wonder if thou wilt again have birth,
And slowly to a perfect angel grow ?
If those whom thou hast loved while here on earth,
Thou shalt by intuition come to know ?

'Tis strange, when first I looked into thine eyes,
A phantom recollection cross'd my mind ;
It may be that my soul did recognise
A kindred spirit in some life behind !

And if I thus shall know thee when we meet—
How glad the recognition, how complete !

The Play

Two doors there are to Time's revolving stage,
An entrance and an exit, and they swing
For ever on their hinges, age to age,
While to and fro men's souls are trafficking.

Two doors there are—the portal is but one,
Where mingle they who come and they who go ;
There meets the father his posthumous son,
And there the soldier clasps his fallen foe.

We play in life our Heaven-appointed parts,
We fight our mimic battles day by day ;
For baubles vain we strive and break our hearts,
And each man's life is but a passion play.

A play ? Then there are watchers all unseen,
And we are blinded by the glare between.

The Truant

When I remember I am on a star,
And think of all the unknown stars there be ;
How many a speck that shines in night afar,
Blooms like a flower throughout eternity :

Then doth my mind o'erleap its sensual bound,
My soul escapes the dull confines of clay,
And wanders through the fields of space profound,
Picking fair planets for a sweet nosegay !

But back to school my truant soul again
Full soon is brought to chastisement and tears,
And set to learn the history of pain
And solve the knotted problem of the years.

Thus to my fellow-scholars I'm the fool ;
This sheet's my cap, and poverty's my stool !

Apologia

I've dar'd the dark, ransacked the haunted room,
And laid the stalking spectres of the mind ;
I've search'd the inmost secrets of the tomb,
And trod the vale of shadow lone and blind.

There are no doubts which I have not detain'd,
I've fraternis'd with Sorrow and Despair
Till not a spark of faith or hope remain'd,
And Love herself refus'd my couch to share.

'Twas not that age or death were drawing nigh,
Or an anæmic youth's morbidity—
My blood is red, and clear my outer eye,
My brain and limbs are shackleless and free :

I dar'd the cheerless avenues of shade
Because I saw so many were afraid.

“The Second Man”

Two men there are in me ; the first man deals
With mundane matters, and would be content
To pass his days in common service pent,
So long as he is sure of sleep and meals.

He ponders not the passing of the years,
Or dreams of asking whither he is bound,
For he is formed out of his bed—the ground,
Where he at last will lie in tired tears.

But there's a second man within my breast,
Who never can be satisfied with time ;
He wanders round the world and finds no rest,
But seeks some cause for grief in every clime.
He rises to empyrean heights sublime,
And makes the very Throne of God his quest !

Psyche

Led by the Spirit through the wilderness,
I sat me down upon a fallen tree,
And musing upon man's mortality,
Unto the wind I wail'd my heart's distress :
When, as I wept, one came—all loveliness,
I knew not whence, and sweetly spake to me :
“ Fair youth,” she said, “ what spirit troubleth thee ?”
And my hot brow she fondly did caress.

Asham'd thus to be taken by surprise
By one so fair, I bow'd my head full low ;
When round my neck she slid her velvet arm,
And through my being like a mystic charm
There spread a sweet immortalising glow :
I rose, and lo ! she'd vanish'd—from mine eyes !

Circe

Her brows are black, and yet her hair
Is of a fiery hue ;
Her face is strong and strangely fair,
Her eyes are deep sea blue :
And should they look in yours, beware !
They'll search you through and through !

She was not made for wifely bliss,
To rear a laughing brood :
Her lips are far too firm to kiss,
She never shall be woo'ed ;
But whom she woos beware of this—
There's tiger in her blood !

Beware ! Beware ! Go seek a maid
With all believing eyes,
Who, though of simpler fashion made,
Is not so seeming wise :
And leave the stern and saucy jade
To her vain sorceries.

Death's Bride

Too like the lily is that cheek of thine,
Too chaste and delicate for fondling ;
Thine eyes are lit with lustre too divine,
Thou art too frail a thing.

Thou seemest not of ordinary clay—
But an illusion, an evasive breath
Of heavenly fragrance, a clear beam of day
Through the blind chink of death.

Thou art too much a soul for this coarse hand,
I fear to touch thee, lest thou shouldst depart ;
Afar in raptur'd reverence I stand,
Holding my eager heart !

Love and I

Love clasp'd me with a swift embrace,
And look'd me closely in the eyes,
Pour'd kisses on my blushing face,
Ere I could question if 'twere wise.

She held my ear with silv'ry song,
And charm'd to ecstasy my shame ;
All words were music on her tongue,
But golden music was my name.

Then hand in hand did Love and I
Roam through the dewy meads of morn,
Wearing the rose of chastity—
The lily rose that has no thorn.

She led me to her palace grand,
And there we liv'd a purple noon ;
She laid her wealth at my command,
Nor lack'd my heart life's sweetest boon.

But Love grew sad at set of sun,
And doff'd her rich embroider'd vest,
Put on the garment of a nun,
And cross'd her hands upon her breast.

Come Away

Wake ! my love, for it is day ;
Rise, my Fair One, come away !
All the shadows now are flown,
And the sun is on his throne ;
Hill and dale are drench'd with dew,
All the world is made anew !

Hark ! the songs of happy birds,
Songs they sing too sweet for words !
Shall I tell thee what they sing ?
'Tis a song of love and spring !
Winter with its wind and rain
Now is past, and Spring again
Lightly treads the virgin meads,
Waking all the buried seeds.

Daffodils their trumpets blow
O'er the barren world, and, lo !
All the dead in beauty rise,
And the laughing azure skies
Bid us through the valleys stray—
Rise, my Fair One, come away !

The Thrush's Song

The wind is cold, but its frosty sting
Is drawn, for the air is sweet and fresh ;
And in my nostrils I scent the spring,
My spirit rejoices in the flesh !

Not one spring only, but all the springs—
Yea, chiefly those that are farthest fled—
Are in and about me, the thrush that sings
In yon naked tree is a thrush long dead.

Long dead—ah, this is no mournful rhyme,
I sing, like the thrush, a song of hope ;
He knows that death is a trick of time,
That a planet is God's kaleidoscope !

Sing, feather'd bard, till I learn your lay,
Your song of the past and the fair to be ;
Spin on, bright planet, and bring that day—
The summer day that is calling me !

May the Seventh, 1910

(LIVERPOOL'S "MAY-DAY").*

Last night the west was weird ; stupendous clouds,
Like a long range of lunar mountains, stood
Against a tragic sky of ghostly grey ;
While overhead hung airy continents,
Dread presagers of tempest, whence there came
Bright, stinging darts of icy rain. The air
Seem'd all possess'd with howling wraiths, as I
Headed my way, half blinded, toward the town.
I saw the city's lights like fallen stars,
And men, like ants, creep through its glimmering ways ;
And, as I join'd them, to my ears there came
The solemn tidings of a stricken King.

Throughout the night, as on my bed I lay,
Fitful I slept ; the furies of the north
Went wailing through the streets, as they did sing
A canticle of hell ! At last I rose
And drew aside my casement blind, and lo !
Adown the west there blaz'd the morning star—
Fair Venus ! Daughter of the Sun ! Methought,
Had I ne'er lived for anything but this,—
Through all these stormy years,—'twere not in vain !
When on my raptur'd sight the comet gleamed,
That fiery Absalom, which boded ill
To Emperors of old—and from my heart
I breath'd a fearful prayer for Britain's King.

(* *Saturday, May 7th, 1910, was the day fixed by the
Liverpool Corporation for their May-Day procession.*)

How tranquil is the morn ! Now scarce a breath
Bestirs the budding twigs : blue heaven smiles
In the clear, shallow pools : the birds rejoice
As if this were the happiest of days !
And is it not ? This is the children's day !
To-day their cherub faces line the streets,
To view the gay procession, and their hearts
Leap to their eyes for joy, while dulcet cheers
Shall ring like music on the sunlit air !
Then, when the glittering pageantry is passed,
They one and all shall sing—' God save ——

“ THE KING

IS DEAD ! ”

Thus fell the bolt.—Lay by your gauds,
Be silent now, ye streets, for death has turn'd
Our songs of spring to winter's dirge of woe.

He was a noble King. He stopp'd the mouths
Of lions, put to flight the hungry wolves
Of war, and made e'en peace heroic ! Stood
Serene amid the clash of jarring creeds :
And, as a genial sire calmly surveys
The quarrels of his children, he beheld
His people's feuds, and smiled on each and all !
But if his people feel so keen the loss,
Alas ! sweet Queen, what poignant grief is thine !
Thou fairest flower of Denmark, whom he cull'd
In that glad springtime when his Mother bore
So womanly the sceptre of our land.
Halecyon those days that greeted thee, O Queen !
When Albert Edward brought thee like a rose
To England—those sweet days are now no more.

Now Death, that black enchanter, hath uprais'd
His hand against the sun, and lo ! heaven's orbs
Appear at noonday ! And the life of men
And nations, with their blatant vanities,
Is but an Arab's tale beneath the stars !

THE END.

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